587 The proverb says:

[539] "He who knows not how to kiss,
his nose he will blow on you."

The divorcée often develops strategy and techniques to win a man of her choice: She may give him a ring to remind him of her when he is away from her; when he visits her, she feeds him "ergo" (thick buttermilk), so he will be sleepy and remain at her house, rather than go to his men friends to gamble. Women have a proverb about men:

[539] "Like a child, (he is attracted) by the ring,
like a cat, (he is attracted) by milk."

If she has a mother who is a good cook, the divorcee will employ this attraction, saying:

[539] "More than the flesh of the daughter,
(he is attracted by)
the butter (i.e. cooking) of the mother."

[832] When this fails, she may enlist the supernatural aid of love amulets, "mistäfaqer", purchased from the däbtära scribe with the man's name inscribed, to inspire love for her in him; and in addition to the fee, may treat the däbtära to beer and sweets to enlist his greatest power on her behalf.

588 If her lover is already married, she may nevertheless establish a "sweetheart" ("rushemma") relationship with him, though she has no claim on "danoz" wages or recognition of this temporary wifehood. This is also one of the few cases in which a woman will try not to have children.

548 588 However, a divorcee who was divorced largely on account of her barrenness - and about 25% of the townswomen are barren at least for some years - will try to have a child, even out of wedlock. She will then very likely join the "unattached women" in the streets inhabited

831 run to women, carrying ferns (symbolic of the vulva), and tease them with shouts of "ens anqetqet" (quivering vulva).

Polite references to sexual matters usually employ biblical terminology, requiring at least some formal, traditional education. They include such terms, wholly or partly from the old Geez language still used in liturgy, as "abalä zär" (lit. master of the seed) for male genital organs in a generic sense; "bellet" (lit. divisions) for differences between male and female sex; "akalat" (lit. part of body) for male and female, or "affärat sega" (lit. flesh of modesty).

793 834 Coptic priests are not supposed to indulge in sexual intercourse even with their wives the night before they are to officiate in church, and they therefore avoid sleeping on the same "alga" (bedstead) that night.

834 Modesty of body exposure, particularly of women, is the general pattern, though children may be barely clothed in ragged shifts leaving much skin bare (see life cycle, etc.). In fact, deliberate exposure of the body is regarded as a sign of madness, and this is the popular reaction to Western pictures of "bathing beauties" in swim suits. When bathing, persons will join members of their own sex and go to secluded places in the river. On the feast day of Temqät, (Epiphany), some rustic men strip and swim in the pool blessed by the priests, but women do not. Breasts may be visible during nursing, but if there are strangers around, they will be covered to prevent any possible evil eye from drying them up.

832 Love magic is widely and strongly believed in, particularly since it is supplied by the quasi-church functionary, the däbtära scribe. He is first called upon to write amulets, which are still respectable and, can be worn in outwardly visible containers, by women, for no one can know that the amulet is not directed against the devil. But the magic activities of the däbtära, secretly, go far beyond that.

832 Men, particularly young men, are also among his loyal customers.

The dabtära may be called upon to embark upon a magic strategy designed to bewitch a person of the opposite sex so as to fall in love with the client, and also to render the beloved impotent or frigid to all rivals. On a moonlit night, or when unobserved, the dabtara will go to bush or field to seek a certain root, then write the magic bann on a piece of linen, including the names of the persons to be joined in the love bewitchment. This bann is then read over the root as many as 49 times. The root is then chewed, and the masticated paste is carefully preserved for application as soon as possible, to the skin and clothing of the beloved. To do this, tactics such as feigning anger at the beloved and spitting the paste at her so she will not suspect, may be resorted to.

To render a beloved faithful and thoroughly frigid to all rivals may require an even more difficult strategy. The ideal method is to wipe her vulva, preferably the vagina, with the cloth that contains the magic bann, on the pretext of cleaning her after coitus. Conversely, a woman employing this magic may use the cloth to wipe his genitals after coitus, to render him impotent with other women. If the bewitched finds the cloth, he or she can break the spell by washing it in a running river that contains fish. Even if not all of the ink or dye comes off, if fish can nibble at it, it is believed that the spell is broken and carried off.

There are many variations of this basic procedure. Some dabtära "prove" their power to sceptical clients by "testing" the efficacy of the bann and the paste. They may agree to try it out on one of the "unattached women" that earn a living by brewing daily barley beer. They enter her "tälla bét", order beer, and the dabtara, apparently
833 chewing on an olive twig preparatory to polishing his teeth with it, which is general common procedure, spits out what the woman believes

832 to be ends of the twig, actually magic paste, "accidentally" hitting her. They pay for their beer, and leave. The next day, the dabtara takes his skeptical client past the same beer-hut, and lo and behold, the woman calls out an invitation to them, and refuses payment for the beer consumed. The client is now convinced.

This love magic is done secretly because it is considered highly unethical. At least the dabtara is expected to "release" the person "helplessly bewitched" after a while, and not leave the victim in this condition forever.

The dabtära is believed to know, from books on magic, not only the efficacy of banns and plants, but also of animals. His favorite animal is believed to be the chameleon ("zälababäda"), particularly in love magic, ordered by women. The animal is dried, crushed to powder, and the woman then mixes this with her urine. She must read the formula out loud, containing her name and the name of her husband or the man she wishes to hold against all rivals, then throw the mixture in the air - to be carried by the winds and spirits.

751 The dabtara is believed also to have medicinal magic. Some "careful" men, before going to the adventures of the mead-house ("täj-bét"), go to his house to drink a magic potion to protect them from venereal disease that night.

828 838 When a woman consistently acts like a man, or a man like a woman, it is believed that there is some biological "mistake of God". In the case of a woman, she is likely to be blamed and even insulted, called "mannish" ("wändawände"). This term is used if she acts independent, takes interest only in masculine weapons and activities, and speaks in hard, insubordinate ways. If she is physically a tall, powerful virago, she is called "wändawärad" (lit. male-female), a female with too much

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

X794 more tricky but less powerful than hars. This enables her to relieve
756 the sufferings of her clients; without, however, curing them. For a possessive spirit can be turned into an asset - into a protective spirit once the spirit's demands are known and regularly fulfilled. Why should anyone wish to reject such a protective spirit who helps solve the problems of life and even "beautifies the face" with an inner glow? Only a few hopelessly evil demons, mostly female, need to be exorcised.

X794 Women, otherwise limited in cultural participation among the Amhara,
562 particularly in the church institution where their expressive behavior and opportunity for service are almost entirely rejected, constitute a considerable majority in the zar societies, even in the top leadership; so that many men think of the zar cult as predominantly feminine, and consult zar doctors by stealth only, at night. Men have ambivalent feelings about their wives attendance: they are often jealous of the "possessive" spirit; object to the financial outlays demanded by the "zar" spirit on pain of "relapse" into the patient's catatonic, schizoid or hysterical state; object to their wives being at the doctor's hut all night during worship-sessions; but admit that their wives are thereafter easier to live with, indeed more beautiful when the "wəqābi" (inspiration) "is on their face".

[182] Thus the "zar" institution affects many other Amhara institutions: Marriage and the Family; Religion; Economics; Ethnic Relations; and even linguistics.

X794 The psychological attitude in Amhara culture which emphasizes the
755 aspect of possession in love, and in other intense human relations, has
[832] already been pointed out in connection with "love magic", which attempts, instead of arousing love in the partner, to render him or her submissive.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

X794 TTC 753 cultivating the spirit. If she is already pregnant, the zar may cause a miscarriage; either because he wants his human mate "pure", or to take revenge on the husband for miserly refusal of a chicken or young goat requested by the wife for the "zar" sacrifice - which may cause the zar to take the fetus as his "mäqwädäsha" (lit. love gift).

When a male zar appears to a human female in a dream, he takes the form of a husband visiting his wife, if he is in a benevolent mood; if [231] angry, he takes the form of a black dog (though Ethiopian dogs are reddish) or of a snake. The actual possession, in this relationship is a magical coitus, expressed in the violently sensuous "gurri" dance. Some women possessed by a male zar drape their shamma (toga) in male fashion; some even put on ornaments of oldtime male warriors (lion mane, leopard skin), male jodphurs - all at the request of her male "zar", in which case she is actually "dressing" him.

X794 TTC A woman who sleeps alone risks being struck by a male zar, and even neighbors sometimes admit having heard a "spirit visitor" at [845] night. When a baby is born deformed, it is regarded as the result [841] of a magical coitus. Male zar spirits avoid menstruating women, and during this period they may not sit on the skin of an animal that has been sacrificed to the zar. Male zar prefer to possess beautiful human females, and add to their beauty; so that some male [832] connoisseurs of female beauty claim that a woman's glowing charms leave her when her protective zar ("weqabi") leaves her. Therefore, there is some ambivalence in the hostility of human husbands to the possession of their wives by male zars; which may contribute to the frequency of such possession. For, at least, the neglected wife is then no longer ignored and may even become the center of attraction.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

836 183 peers with the insulting term *ʃilb* ("castrated one"). Indeed, the word that comes closest to signifying male adolescent in Amharic, *goramsä*, has the primary connotation of one who goes around with women.

836 572 [837] The conditions attending premarital sexual experience for youths explain in part the nature of adolescent male peer relations. A *goramsä* needs at least one fairly close friend, not only as a confidant for his "secrets," but also to aid him in his affairs. When one *goramsä* goes to the home of a married woman—the strict controls against premarital affairs for girls limit his choice to married women or divorcees—the other stands guard to see that the husband or anyone else does not intrude. When he finds himself in rivalry with a competitor for the same woman, the friend assists him if the fighting gets difficult. On the other hand, the existence of a limited number of accessible females in any area implies that no alliance of friends can become very large; the competition is too great. The conflicts of interest among *goramsä* often provoke feuding and sometimes serious *dulä* fights.

836 [585] The unwed girl, by contrast, must remain a virgin at all costs. It is important to the groom, not only because of the religious and social sentiments involved, but also because the Amhara male cherishes the sense of "conquering" his woman. A girl who is found not to be a virgin on her wedding night will be beaten by her husband and possibly returned to her parents. Her parents will be scandalized, and, if she is sent back, will probably give her a beating.

882 In order to protect the girl's virginity, she is kept under close watch by her parents after the age of ten or eleven. They do not allow her to go outside the home area by herself or to associate with boys who are not her relatives. She attends festive celebrations in the company of her parents. In some families she is kept from doing excessively heavy work in order to prevent the accidental rupture of her hymen.

881 582 The onset of menstruation is kept secret, since menstruation is seen as a shameful event for the unmarried woman. But as the girl approaches the age of puberty her mother will be advised by other female relatives that it is time to be on the lookout for a husband. Twelve or thirteen is the customary marrying age for girls, as compared with the late teens or early twenties for boys; and it has not been uncommon for girls to marry still younger, especially in former times.

*883 • [832] [584] This strict surveillance of the daughter does not wholly prevent a mild sort of flirting which occurs at the marketplace or on public holidays. On the latter occasions, especially Masqäl and Ṭimqat, the girl may make some effort to appear attractive. She may wear her best clothes, dress up her hair, and, if she can afford it, put on a bit of perfume. These occasions provide a chance for the unmarried boy to spot an interesting mate, in which case he

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

covers the Amhara home.* The latter is related to customs concerning adoption.

The adoption of children among traditional Amhara takes place through a ritual in which the child sucks the honey-dipped thumb of his intended foster parent. The latter thereby becomes the child's *ṭuṭ abbāt*, or breast-father. In some cases the child actually sucks the nipples of the *ṭuṭ abbāt*. Used metaphorically, the image of sucking someone's breast is employed to indicate becoming close to, or ingratiating oneself with, a superior; breast-feeding is so explicitly connected with emotional security that people are inclined to allude to it when finding a new source of security.

The Amhara's attachment to passive, pleasurable activities centering on the oral zone appears in a wide variety of forms. Manipulation of the lips is one of these. Amhara often stand about fingering their lips or rubbing them against some object, much as people in another culture might scratch their heads or stroke their chins. Children may be humored by having their lips played with by a relative. The frequent covering and uncovering of the mouth with a part of the toga, that is so characteristic of the Amhara, may be a sublimated form of this.

The lips are used in Amhara culture for a variety of expressive purposes. The Amhara identify persons and places, not by pointing with the finger or hand, but by distending the lips in a certain direction. Kissing, while seldom used for romantic purposes, serves a number of other expressive functions. Relatives or friends of either sex kiss each other on both cheeks after a long separation, the older or superior in status kissing first. Children and servants greet their superiors by kissing their feet, which they also do to show gratitude for some favor. One kisses one's own hands before extending them to receive a gift. Kissing one's fingers is done to signify an oath or a special appreciation of something, the meaning being "I swear by it."

Religious sentiment is typically expressed through kissing. The devout Amhara kisses his fingers and touches the table to show thanksgiving after a meal. The church is greeted by kissing a part of the building, and going to church is referred to as "kissing the church." Following devotional services the priest's cross is kissed by all present, and often the Holy Book is kissed as well. When the ark is brought outside on holidays, reverence is shown by falling to the ground and kissing the earth.

While, moreover, romantic kissing is an uncommon activity among the Amhara, Amharic literature at times represents this activity with poignant intensity. Thus, in an unwritten Amharic couplet one hears:

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* The Gurage, by contrast, place a straight stick atop their homes. So do the Amhara of Gojjam Province.

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The boundaries of your lips are like the sugar cane;
No matter how much one sucks them, one is never satisfied.

And in one of the few lyric passages in the first novel ever written in Amharic, the author resorts to the imagery of kissing in describing the beauty of an army camp at sunset:

> The plain on which they had encamped was vaster than the mind's eye could measure. Except for that hill on which he stood, there were no elevations or declivities; no roots to trip or confound the foot; not a stone to discomfit the eye. It looked like a calm sea that every breeze had spared. The boundaries of heaven and earth were united by lips of love; lip to lip they were joined like the parts of fitted basketry. It appeared as though it would hurt them to separate, that they had entered a vow not to part.[5]

Talking for the sake of talking is another oral outlet of which the Amhara is generally fond. "In every country," remarked Arnauld d'Abbadie, "the plowman is miserly and sly; but the Ethiopian is, in addition, particularly loquacious."[6] The simple greeting of acquaintances evokes a barrage of ritualistic conversation, a phenomenon which stunned the Englishman Harris:

> Even two old crones, who are obviously tottering on the very brink of the grave, and who are afflicted with every pain and with every sorrow entailed by the fall of our first parents, never meet in the street without indulging in a string of good wishes which are reiterated so long as their breath will permit. "How are you? How do ye do? How have you passed your time? Are you well? Are you very well? Are you quite well? Are you perfectly well? Are you not well?"—are questions which serve as the prelude to a thousand other interrogatories; and at each response the Deity must be invoked as to the unadulterated happiness and perfect felicity that has been unremittingly experienced since the last meeting.[7]

A number of other conventions provide further opportunities for this pleasure in talking. Anecdotes and gossip are not merely reported, but are expounded at length with the aid of colorful expressions and gestures. Riddle games are enjoyed by adults as well as young people. Men vie with one another at length in a semiformalized kind of playful boasting. In the church schools all reading is done aloud, a habit which persists among many students of secondary schools when they study outside of class.

A related pleasure in making sounds for their own sake appears in the Amhara's delight in repeating the words or nonsense syllables of his folk songs. On a more refined level, there is his evident pleasure in lulling over and savoring the lines of a choice couplet. We have here for a whole culture an instance of what Brill has ascribed to the poets:

> Poetry is a sensuous or mystic outlet through words, or, as it were, through a chewing and sucking of nice words and phrases. The poet plays with the